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## NOTES AND QUERIES.

THE NECESSITY OF COLLECTING THE TRADITIONS OF THE NATIVE RACES.  
— The remarkable prayer of which some notice is given in the "Folk-Lore Scrap-Book" of this number suggests a comparison with the story of a famous Babylonian tablet. The latter also describes a descent to the lower world: Istar goes down to seek her lost husband, Tammuz, who is in the power of Allat, the goddess of witchcraft. The legend has given birth to the tale of Venus and Adonis (Sayce, "Chaldean Account of Genesis," ch. xiv.).

Istar passes the seven gates, and at each is deprived of some part of her apparel, until she comes naked into the presence of Allat, and is herself cursed. Since she, the spiritual essence of love and joy, is confined in the world of death, love and joy cease in the world above, until the great gods send an envoy to Allat, who is compelled to allow the return of the goddess. The ancient custom of mourning the death of Tammuz still survives in India, though under the form of lamentation for the martyrdom of a Mohammedan saint.

The Moqui prayer, although, according to the recorder, not in itself of very great antiquity, nevertheless relates to a system of conceptions more primitive than the epic which was popular more than four thousand years ago. The descent, here, is not a legend of a deity, but an experience of the worshipper, — an experience which any worshipper may himself repeat. Certainly the idea, in this form, is not less striking. To pass downward through the cavern, from which ancestors rose to the world of light; to go, guarded, a wandering deity on either side, through rock chambers, beset by cruel enemies; to discover in the lodge of the witch-goddess (the lodge which in a more advanced state of society would have been a temple) the spiritual self; to ascend under divine protection; to see nature again joyous, the broad fields beautified with the white corn; to return to the abandoned body, and feel all the parts of the man, physical and spiritual, united in a rejoicing whole, — certainly such a belief is as striking as that which supplied a theme to Greek art and poetry.

It cannot be too strongly urged that the present need of the study of the religions of primitive races is not theoretic discussion, but practical research; not comparison, but collection. It is of no avail to refer mythology to savage intelligence, as long as the psychology of savage races is in as unsatisfactory a state as at present. What is needed is to examine that psychology; to study the mythology of native races not as curious fancies or absurd superstitions, but as living beliefs, having a relation to the intelligence and imagination, the motives and conduct, of the men who hold them to be an explanation of the world. To complete the record of the mythology of American Indians is to the full as important as to make researches in Greece, Assyria, or Egypt; and in one respect it is more important, because a very few years remain in which to do the work, and also because no other nation will do it if Americans do not. The government, through

the Bureau of Ethnology, is doing much ; but the collection should be as extensive as possible, and the work of the government needs to be supplemented by private investigation.

Unfortunately, the American public is indifferent to the necessity. The indifference no doubt arises from ignorance ; but such an excuse is hardly valid in the case of our universities and libraries. Certainly private benefactors are doing something : it is only necessary to mention the work of the Hemenway Exploring Expeditions in Arizona, and the undertakings of the Peabody Museum of American Archæology. But it seems strange that the rich Western communities are willing to see their monuments — monuments which will be as precious to America as Stonehenge to Great Britain — perishing, or preserved only by Eastern gifts. Why does Cincinnati allow women of Boston to have the eternal credit of saving the Serpent Mound, which in five years would have ceased to exist, had not the generosity of individuals interfered ? Why does Cincinnati, when its attention has been so forcibly called to the matter, allow similar remains to disappear ? Why does not the great and wealthy State of California do something to maintain the monuments and record the traditions of the native races whom the white men have dispossessed and degraded ? The time has passed in which it was proper for an intelligent person to look on an Indian with general contempt, as a dirty brute, whose ideas are of no consequence. But it is of little use, apparently, to preach ; we shall go on making amends for our lack of attention to these obligations by self-laudation and encomiums on national prosperity. The student of religions a century hence will find gaps where there might have been a solid highway, and will console himself by uncomplimentary remarks. — *W. W. N.*

FOLK-LORE AND MYTHOLOGY. — In the first number of this journal it was pointed out that it was the intention of the editors to include the mythology of the native races in the scope of their labors, an inclusion obviously wise and necessary. But, in making this statement, it was by no means intended to discuss the relation of the terms "folk-lore" and "mythology." As to whether these terms can be precisely distinguished, or limited to separate provinces, opinions may differ. The appellation "mythology" will continue to be applied to that living system of tales and beliefs which, in primitive peoples, serves to explain existence ; "folk-lore" was primarily invented to describe the unwritten popular traditions of civilized countries. Had it not been out of regard to brevity, this publication might have been called the "Journal of American Folk-Lore and Mythology."

PRESERVATION OF ARCHÆOLOGIC MONUMENTS. — It is proposed to set aside certain portions of the public domain in the southwest territories in which are characteristic remains of former and of present aboriginal life, and to hold them as national reserves, and a bill to accomplish that end is now pending in Congress. The progress of this legislation will be watched with great interest by all Americans who consider a proper respect to the history and monuments of America essential to national honor. This